

Database Marketing:

On November 16th 2013, my Bride Stacey and I sat down on an overstuffed leather sofa on the second floor of the Gaylord Texan Resort in Dallas Texas.

The time was 8:35am and we had just eaten breakfast. At breakfast we made a big decision. Our decision was to skip the 4th and final day of the real estate conference we were attending. No, we hadn't decided to play hooky in order to slide down the frozen slide at the Chinese Ice Sculpture exhibit. And it wasn't to saunter over to the Glass Cactus Nightclub for some day drinking... no, we decided to spend the entire day organizing, recategorizing, and weeding my database. I know, exciting!

After a couple of failed attempts to log onto the resorts wifi, I was able to wrangle the password from one of the event staff. The conference apparently had their own private wifi network set up through the hotel, and now we had access!

We made a successful internet connection and logged into Top Producer, the CRM program we've used for many years.

During the three days of the real estate conference that we'd attended there were several really good speakers like Jairek Robbins (Tony's son) and Darren Hardy the CEO of Success Magazine. But on the real estate side of things there wasn't a whole lot of new takeaways for us.

We did however have several very successful strategy sessions together over meals and cocktails. In those sessions we walked away with three very important objectives that we wanted to implement right away for the business.

1. Clean up the database.
2. Implement and deploy a printed monthly newsletter.
3. Design a plan for ongoing proper communication to the database.

Now here's the thing, I got my license in July of 1998, and started practicing full-time in January of 2000. It was now November of 2013 and I had yet to implement a plan for proper communication for my database. Up until that moment my communication plan consisted of a monthly canned generic letter from Brian Buffini, and a yearly refrigerator calendar. And sure, on a rare occasion I would even call a handful of people from the database. Nothing authentic. Nothing consistent.

So we start digging into Top Producer with three things in mind.

1. Delete all of the excess contacts that cluttered the hell out of the database. All the old internet leads, hotlines leads, dead people, etc. So that we are only left with past clients, current clients, people we know, vendors, current leads, and real estate agents.
2. Retag everyone that makes it past the first cut. Because at this point we had way too many similar and redundant tags. We wanted congruency. Our new tags would be HUG (we got this term from the book Hug Your Customers), Client A, B, and C, SOI A, B, and C, Vendor A, B, and C, and Agent.

3. Determine if anyone in the database had sold their home with another agent since being entered into the database.

Here's a real quick definition of the A,B,C's (it's easy as 1,2,3... as simple as doe ray me... man, I miss Michael Jackson!):

A. People that would definitely do business with you and refer you.

B. People you think will do business with you and refer you.

C. You don't know if these people will do business with you or refer you, but you're gonna find out.

The database reboot ended up taking three full days. And I mean three, full, days! I didn't take calls or let my team interrupt me at all during the database cleanse.

Now, I know deep in my gut that I was not doing a good job communicating with my database, but I couldn't have possibly imagined what I found by going through it person by person. To my horrific surprise, we counted 37 people from the database that had sold their home with another agent! These were past clients and sphere of influence that made up the tally of 37. We didn't even count in the number of unconverted leads. We can't even begin to tally the number of buy side deals we missed out on from those 37 sellers, selling. I would imagine at least 60% of them purchased another home in my marketplace.

Let's do the quick math on these 37 listing deals I missed out on. My average commission check is right around \$5,000. $37 \times \$5,000 = \$185,000$!!!!!! \$185,000 I missed out on sadly by not doing what can be done very easily! Unearthing this unfortunate lost treasure reiterated our desperate need for a better system for the database communication.

After the database was powerwashed and reorganized, we began to outline our proper communication plan.

Here's what we came up with:

- Authentic and honest printed, monthly newsletter (strategically crafted to deepen the relationship, provide third party endorsements, and promote referrals).
- Greeting cards: New Year's, Spring, 4th of July, Thanksgiving, and Birthday (a well crafted message was written for each card and the entire process was uploaded in SendOutCards.com, which is now handled automatically)
- Year End Refrigerator Calendar which are big enough to write notes and appointments on. We use MagnetStreet.com for the calendars.

We also outlined a calling schedule based on A, B, and C. A's called every other month. B's every quarter, and C's twice yearly. I haven't made a single call yet. I know it's crazy, a real estate agent that doesn't like to make phone calls, but I want to be as open and honest with you as possible. Making phone calls all the time just isn't something I want to do.

When I finally started to run my business like a business in 2010 things changed dramatically. Then, at the end of 2012 when I wanted to focus more on helping my team by operating as CEO, things changed again for the better.

In 2013, I sold 151 homes working no evenings, no weekends, and no Fridays! But, I knew there was so much more we could do if we properly communicated with the database. So, after implementing the communication plan, Stacey and I masterminded during our wine and steak soaked strategy sessions at the Gaylord Texan resort in Dallas, Texas.....our business jumped from 151 homes sold in 2013 to 206 in 2014. While still working the same schedule of no evenings, no weekends and no Fridays...and not making a single cold call or even an outbound call to my database, if I'm being embarrassingly honest with you.

My business model is a bit different than most. My company is just me and my team, that's it. We focus on selling homes and creating great customer experiences. I spend zero time on recruiting agents to my team.

So my little team and I end 2014 with 206 homes sold, \$1,008,000 in commissions with nearly \$700,000 of it coming from the database/soi.

To make a long story longer, I strolled into 2015 with only three strategic objectives:

1. Hire Vyrat marketing to add PED's (performance enhancing drugs, for those that don't watch much ESPN) to my database marketing with twice monthly market update videos.
2. Add continuously to my email list.
3. Add strategically to my newsletter mailing list.

That's it! those are the only changes.

As I write this on July 8, 2015, we have closed 128 home and have 42 pending. Our pace will have us swilling spiked eggnog at just over 250 homes sold for 2015....not bad for a guy that doesn't make any phone calls.

UPDATE: We ended 2015 with 270 homes sales!

In 2016 we closed 468 home sales and earned over \$2,200,000 in commissions, with over \$1,450,000 coming directly from our database and sphere of influence.

Along with everything you've read so far, we ramped up the database with "strategic adds". By targeting people with large spheres of influence of their own (police chiefs, mayors, school superintendents, etc) and those that are already prone to giving referrals (insurance agents, financial advisors, etc). These consistent and continued practices has led to an exponential growth spurt in this small business of mine.

Amazing what can be accomplished overtime with a plan.

Sincerely,
Bart Vickrey

Real Estate Jedi
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